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## Division on Civil Rights Calls on Facebook to Monitor Comments On Group Page Encouraging Violence Against Orthodox Jews in Ocean County

APR 05 2019 11:52 AM



Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the Division on Civil Rights today called on Facebook to help stem the "rising tide of hate" in New Jersey and across the nation by examining a Facebook page known as Rise Up Ocean County (RUOC).

In a letter to Facebook Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg, Division on Civil Rights Director Rachel

Wainer Apter notes that a Division review of the RUOC page found posts, comments, and videos that promoted incitements to violence against Orthodox Jews, including "We need to get rid of them like Hitler did," "when they resist, bulldoze them" and "...the gang war has begun."

"Far too often, we have seen how hateful comments can escalate to hateful conduct," said Attorney General Grewal. "Our Division on Civil Rights is committed to fighting this rising tide of hate, and we'll continue taking proactive steps to make New Jersey a more welcoming community for people of all backgrounds and faiths."

Director Wainer Apter's letter points out that the Rise Up Ocean County page "appears to have been created in late 2018 to oppose what it calls the overdevelopment of Lakewood, New Jersey, by Orthodox Jews."

Among other assertions, RUOC states that the quality of life in Ocean County is "under assault" and that a group of Orthodox Jewish rabbis "who control the fate of Lakewood" is leading an intended "colonization" of the township.

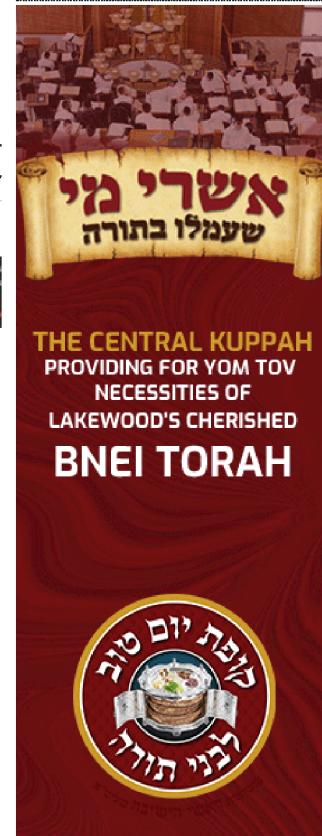
In her letter, Director Wainer Apter notes that the Division on Civil Rights was created by the New Jersey Legislature 75 years ago not only to enforce the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), but also to prevent acts of bias and discrimination based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, and other protected categories.



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Director Wainer Apter's letter advises Zuckerberg that both the Ocean County Freeholders and the Lakewood Township Committee have passed resolutions condemning the RUOC page, with Lakewood's resolution labeling the content an effort to "incite ill will."

One comment on the RUOC page cited in the Director's letter, that the RUOC administrators "liked," asserts that, "Toms River people need to declare war. Surrounding towns will come and join the fight. Wake up people. VOTES WON'T FIX THIS."

The Director writes that RUOC also parodied "First They Came ..." – the famous poem written by a German Lutheran pastor to condemn the silence of Germans during the Holocaust. In the RUOC parody, Director Wainer Apter writes, the poem is invoked to encourage individuals "not to be silent in the face of Orthodox Jews moving to Lakewood."

"There is a rising tide of hate around our country and around our state. We at the Division on Civil Rights are working with community organizations to combat it by creating connections, fostering mutual understanding and respect, and confronting stereotypes," Director Wainer Apter tells Zuckerberg. "You at Facebook also have a role to play in monitoring comments that incite violence based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, ancestry, and disability."



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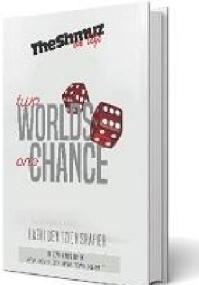


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the silence of Germans during the Holocaust.<sup>1</sup> In the RUOC page parody, the poem was invoked to encourage individuals not to be silent in the face of Orthodox Jews moving to Lakewood.

The Lakewood Township Committee and the Ocean County Freeholders both recently passed resolutions condemning the RUOC page. The Lakewood resolution concluded that RUOC's page was anti-Semitic and "an effort to discredit the Jewish population" and "incite ill will."<sup>2</sup> The Ocean County resolution stated that it was "opposing and condemning the administrators, creators and many of the activities of Rise Up Ocean County."<sup>3</sup>

After learning about RUOC's Facebook page, my office has reviewed the page's content. Many comments on the page appear to incite violence against Orthodox Jews.<sup>4</sup> The following are examples of comments that appear to incite violence against Orthodox Jews:

"We need to get rid of them like Hitler did."

"Start bull-dozing the illegal dwellings, illegal home schools, illegal temples, and so on and re-plant with trees and floral to replace what has been stolen . . . ."

"And when they resist, bull-doze them too."

"I live on the edge of Toms River and Lakewood and the gang war has begun. I have my mac11 loaded."

"I'm knocking out the first person I see from Lakewood at the meeting tomorrow. Again, not a threat. It's a promise."

RUOC's administrators have even "liked" one such comment: "Toms River people need to declare war!!! Surrounding towns will come and join the fight. Wake up people. VOTES WON'T FIX THIS."

There is a rising tide of hate around our country and around our state. We at the Division on Civil Rights are working with community organizations to combat it by creating connections, fostering mutual

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